

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

624
628
and so forth. This conclusion is based on many statements (I have only once been present at discussions between a chief and the kinsmen of a slain man, and then the circumstances were unusual). It may, however, be said with certainty that no amount of pressure from a leopard-skin chief, if it is ever exerted, can settle feuds expeditiously, if at all, between the larger tribal sections. In other disputes the chief acts rarely, and only when both sides strongly desire settlement. He has no jurisdiction to hear cases in a locality. Here, again, I was told that if one party refused to accept his decision as arbiter he might pass the man his leopard-skin, an action tantamount to a curse. The man must then make the chief a gift before he will consent to take back the skin. However, this probably happens only when a man refuses to accept a decision to which every one else, including his own elders, have agreed. I was also told that in disputing a chief's words a man will do so respectfully, first spitting into the chief's hands as a sign of goodwill. No doubt a chief is shown respect on such occasions, but the chiefs I have seen were treated in everyday life like other men and there is no means of telling that a man is a chief by observing people's behaviour to him. His role in disputes may be regarded as a means by which neighbours, who wish a difficulty settled without resort to force and who acknowledge that the other side have a good case, can negotiate.

X

554
We have considered the position of the leopard-skin chief at some length because it is structurally important. He in no way represents or symbolizes the unity and exclusiveness of political groups, but is a mechanism by which, through the institution of the feud, these groups interact and maintain their structural distance. There are other people in Nuerland with ritual powers, of one kind or another, which sometimes make a man well known and, occasionally, very influential, but none of them are politically important, except the prophets whose activities we discuss later. They neither govern nor judge and their sacred functions are not, like those of the leopard-skin chief, specifically related to the interaction of local groups. However, we do not entirely

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

177

554 pass them by because sacred powers often give a man prestige from which he may attain local eminence as an important elder, if they are combined with wealth, ability, and wide kinship connexions.

554
613
231
791
Next to prophets and leopard-skin chiefs the ritual status that carries with it most prestige is that of the *wut ghok*, the Man of the Cattle. Certain lineages have hereditary ritual powers in relation to cattle and are asked to cure sick beasts and to make barren cows fruitful, though only some members of these lineages use their powers. Like leopard-skin chiefs, Men of the Cattle are often members of stranger lineages and not of the aristocratic clan of their tribe. I was told that their curse is feared, as it can be directed to the cattle, and that Nuer do not care to offend them, but, outside tradition, I have not recorded any occasion of its utterance. Apart from the few Men of the Cattle who play a part in the regulation of Age-sets (see Chap. VI), and those who are sometimes consulted about migration to new pastures, they have no public functions. One *wut ghok* of the Eastern Gaajok became very rich and powerful a generation ago, but his prestige was largely due to his possession of magic.

554
613
791
Besides the *kuaa muon*, who has a ritual relationship to the earth, and the *wut ghok*, who has a ritual relationship to the cattle, there are a number of totemic specialists whose ritual connexion with lions, crocodiles, weaver birds, &c., enables them to influence the behaviour of these creatures. A totemic specialist is a possessor (*gwan*) of the spirit (*kwoth*) of his totem. Totemic specialists have no political significance and have no social influence in virtue of their powers alone. There is a war specialist whose duty it is to shake a spear in the face of the enemy and to deliver an invocation against them. He is known as *gwan muot*, possessor of the spear, or *ngul*, and is often, perhaps always, a member of a senior lineage of the dominant clan of the tribe, for he invokes the spear by the spear-name of the clan. There are also magicians of various kinds: leeches, diviners, owners of medicines, and owners of fetishes. Of these specialists only owners of fetishes become prominent members of their communities on account of their ritual powers. Nuer are very much afraid of fetish spirits and believe them to be so powerful that they will even purchase them with cattle. A fetish-owner may become the most influential man in the village, and I have been surprised at the respect and fear with which his neighbours sometimes treat him. Nevertheless, he has no defined authority in controlling the relations of the villagers to one another nor does he represent the village in its relations with neighbouring communities.

XI

554
562
593
Ritual status gives a man vague influence in his locality; but authority only in specific ritual situations. Sex and age are two, more general, conditioning attributes of local influence. Women and children have always a position inferior to that of men. Women occasionally gain a reputation as prophets and magicians but, as a rule, they play no leading part in public affairs. Among the Nuer, relations between the sexes, and between man and wife, are more equitable and give females more privilege than in any other tribe. I have visited in the Southern Sudan. Nevertheless, they are subject to men: daughters to their fathers and wives to their husbands. Boys are under the command of their parents and elder brothers and only become full tribesmen, with the privileges and responsibilities of such, at initiation. The relations between the sexes and between children and adults belong rather to an account of domestic relations than to a study of political institutions.

561
623
When a lad has passed through initiation he becomes 'a man' and when he has married and begotten several children he becomes 'a true man', what we have called an elder. We have from time to time spoken of the part played by elders in homicides and other disputes. When a local community acts corporately and leadership and advice are required, these functions rest with the elders. They decide when seasonal moves are to be made and where camps are to be formed, negotiate marriages, advise on questions of exogamy, perform sacrifices, and so forth. Their opinions on such matters are readily accepted by the younger men, who take little part in the talk unless they are directly concerned in the issue. When the elders disagree there is much shouting and argument, for every one who wishes to speak does so and as often and loud as he pleases. The words of some elders count for more than the words of others and one easily observes that their opinions are usually agreed to.

561
These elders are members of central age-sets, at the present time the *Maker* and *Dangunga*, for members of the most senior sets, the *Thut* and *Boiloc*, take little part in public life. We discuss in Chapter VI the relations between age-sets. Here we

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

179

remark only that there is no constituted authority within each set, all members being of equal status, and that, whilst members of junior sets respect those of senior sets, the authority of older men is personal, very indefinite, and based on analogy with domestic relations within the family. Behaviour between individuals is influenced by the distance between them in the age-set system, but age-sets are not a political institution in the sense of the system having an administrative, military, or judicial organization. 561

Age by itself does not give a man social position. He must have other qualifications as well. Those elders with most influence are the *gaat twot*, the children of bulls. Such a man is called a *tut*, bull, and in strict usage this is equivalent to *dil*, tribal aristocrat. As will be fully explained in Chapter V a *dil* is a member of the dominant clan in each tribe and, in virtue of his membership, has within that tribe a slightly superior social position. This clan is not a ruling class and the enhanced prestige of its members is very indefinite. The clan system has no hereditary leadership; a senior lineage does not rank higher than others; there is no 'father of the clan'; and there is no 'council of clan elders'. *Tut* is also used in a wider sense to refer to men of social position who do not belong to the dominant clan but to other lineages which have long been domiciled in the tribe. A *tut* in this rather wide sense of 'man of good standing', or 'social leader', is usually a scion of an important lineage, the head of his own family, and master of his homestead and herd. He is generally also the eldest surviving son of his father's family and, therefore, head also of the joint family, the master of the hamlet. If he is to gain a social reputation he must also possess sufficient cows to be able to entertain guests and to attract young kinsmen to reside in his byre. Round such a man's homestead are clustered the homesteads of his brothers and married sons and, often enough, the homesteads of his sisters' husbands and daughters' husbands. To be a social leader, whose opinion is readily agreed to, he must also be a man of character and ability. 554 [614]

The authority of a *gat twot*, or *tut wec*, 'bull of the camp', as he is often called, is never formalized. He has no defined status, powers, or sphere of leadership. Lineage, age, seniority in the

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

554 family, many children, marriage alliances, wealth in cattle, prowess as a warrior, oratorical skill, character, and often ritual powers of some kind, all combine in producing an outstanding social personality who is regarded as head of a joint family and of a cluster of cognatic kinsmen and affines, as a leader in village and camp, and a person of importance in the rather vague social sphere we call a district. It is easy to see in village or camp who are its social leaders, and it is these people who have furnished the administration with most government chiefs, for the influence of the leopard-skin chief is mainly restricted to the circuit of his ritual functions and only if he is also a *gat twot* does he exercise influence beyond these limits.

554
596 When we ask, however, in what way a *tut* acts as a leader in his community it is difficult to answer. As the chief man of his family and joint family he takes the most prominent part in settling the affairs of these groups, but he cannot on that account be said to have political authority, for these domestic groups act independently of others in the village, though some co-ordination between them is imposed by their common requirements. A joint family decide on the advice of their *tut* to change camp and the *tut* is supposed to drive in the first tethering peg in the new camp, if he is present, but other joint families of the same camp may decide not to move till another day. Leadership in a local community consists of an influential man deciding to do something and the people of other hamlets following suit at their convenience. When villagers co-operate, there is no appointed leader to organize their activity. If some members of a village are attacked the others rush to their assistance, headed by the swiftest and bravest, but there is no one who calls on them to do so or who organizes their resistance. A village is a political unit in a structural sense, but it has no political organization. There is no headman or other appointed leader invested with authority who symbolizes its unity and no village council. Beyond his domestic groups a *tut* has authority in his village only in the sense that he takes a prominent part in questions of procedure and other discussions. Outside his village he is a well-known person who is generally respected in his district, but he has no political status.

000 In larger groups than a village and camp there is far less

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

In larger groups than a village and camp there is less
THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

181

554

721

co-ordination of activities and less scope for leadership. Only in war is there any lengthy direct co-operation. Men noted for their prowess and ability stir up among the youths enthusiasm for a raid against the Dinka or a fight against another tribal section, and direct what simple tactics are employed, but these men have no political status or permanent leadership. The warriors mobilize in local divisions of their own accord, for there are no regiments and companies under officers, and in fighting they follow the most forward and courageous among them. Some of these warriors become renowned and their reputation quickly attracts recruits for raids. Two of the most famous war leaders were Latjor who led the Jikany tribes, and Bidiit who led the Lou, eastwards. Neither had any ritual qualifications, but both were men of outstanding ability who were members of the dominant clans of their tribes. It is not said by Nuer that either established any political control, or even had great authority, in their tribes. The role of prophets in war is examined later. Between tribal segments there are no other joint activities that require organization and direction.

XII

The lack of governmental organs among the Nuer, the absence of legal institutions, of developed leadership, and, generally, of organized political life is remarkable. Their state is an acephalous kinship state and it is only by a study of the kinship system that it can be well understood how order is maintained and social relations over wide areas are established and kept up. The ordered anarchy in which they live accords well with their character, for it is impossible to live among Nuer and conceive of rulers ruling over them.

181

156

The Nuer is a product of hard and egalitarian upbringing, is deeply democratic, and is easily roused to violence. His turbulent spirit finds any restraint irksome and no man recognizes a superior. Wealth makes no difference. A man with many cattle is envied, but not treated differently from a man with few cattle. Birth makes no difference. A man may not be a member of the dominant clan of his tribe, he may even be of Dinka descent, but were another to allude to the fact he would run a grave risk of being clubbed.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

181
602
431 among his kinsmen, but added that they would not be able to keep them when his relatives at Fadoi came to spend next dry season on the Pibor.

The only way of keeping tobacco among the Nuer is to deny that one possesses it and to keep it well hidden. When I gave Deng a big lump of Anuak tobacco he managed to place a small piece of it in his pipe, but he had at once to distribute the rest of it. When I used to give tobacco to youths at Yakwac they generally took a small piece for immediate use as snuff and asked me to hide the rest, so that they could come and get a bit when they wanted it without any one knowing that they possessed it. I had hiding-places all over my tent. No Nuer can resist the pleadings of his kinsman for tobacco. Age-fellows do not even ask for snuff or tobacco, but, if they find it in a man's byre, they just take it. My own system was to give away at the first opportunity anything I possessed which Nuer might covet and to rest in poverty and peace. Arab merchants are driven almost crazy by Nuer demands for gifts, but they generally speak Nuer well and have considerable knowledge of Nuer habits and so are able to hold their own. Nevertheless I have often observed that they make gifts where no return is to be expected.

Nuer are most tenacious of their rights and possessions. They take easily but give with difficulty. This selfishness arises from their education and from the nature of kinship obligations. A child soon learns that to maintain his equality with his peers he must stand up for himself against any encroachment on his person and property. This means that he must always be prepared to fight, and his willingness and ability to do so are the only protection of his integrity as a free and independent person against the avarice and bullying of his kinsmen. They protect him against outsiders, but he must resist their demands on himself. The demands made on a man in the name of kinship are incessant and imperious and he resists them to the utmost.

XIII

791
● 554 Some personal recollections and general impressions were recorded in the last section in order that it might be understood what are Nuer feelings about authority. It is the more remarkable that they so easily submit to persons who claim certain supernatural powers. Fetishes are a recent introduction to Nuerland, and they inspire much apprehension among the people, so that, in recent years, their owners have often won prestige in their villages and made themselves feared in their

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

185

districts, and occasionally even in large tribal sections. These
fetish owners are not, however, in any sense tribal leaders and
cannot compare in social importance with the prophets.

791
554

Owing to the fact that Nuer prophets had been the foci of
opposition to the Government they were in disgrace and the
more influential of them under restraint or in hiding during my
visits to Nuerland, so that I was not able to make detailed
observations on their behaviour.¹ Without discussing Nuer
religious categories it may be said that a prophet is a man who
is possessed by one of the sky-spirits, or Gods, whom Nuer
regard as sons of the Sky-god. Nuer have great respect for
these spirits and fear, and readily follow, those whom they
possess. Prophets, consequently, achieved greater sanctity and
wider influence than any other persons in Nuer society. A
prophet is known as *guk* and is sometimes referred to as *coh*
kwoth, an ant of God. He also comes into the general category
of *gwan kwoth*, possessor of a spirit.

792

The first prophet to have gained great influence appears to have
been Ngundeng who died in 1906. He was a Lou tribesman of the
GAATLEAK clan and an immigrant from the Eastern Jikany. He
had practised as a leopard-skin chief before he had acquired a
reputation as a prophet by prolonged fasts and other erratic
behaviour, by his skill in curing barrenness and sickness, and by
his prophecies. Women came to him to be made fruitful from all
over Lou, from the Eastern Jikany tribes, and even from the west
of the Zeraf and Nile. Many brought oxen which Ngundeng
sacrificed to Deng, the Sky-god which possessed him. He then
anointed them with his spittle. When small-pox threatened the
Lou he went out to meet it and to stay its advance by sacrifice of
oxen. He foretold cattle epidemics and other events and led
expeditions against the Dinka.

When Ngundeng died, the spirit of Deng eventually entered
his son Gwek, who began to prophesy and to cure barrenness and
sickness, as his father had done. However, he never displayed the
pathological qualities of his father, who appears to have been a
genuine psychotic. The spirit of Deng had passed over his elder
brothers, or did not long reside in them. Nuer say that a spirit
eventually returns to the lineage of the man whom it first

¹ The Government has always looked askance at prophets and opposed their
influence. See, for some pejorative references to them, Jackson, *op. cit.*,
pp. 90-1; Ferguson, Appendix to Jackson, p. 107; C. A. Willis, 'The Cult of
Deng', *S.N. and R.*, vol. xi, 1928, p. 200.

THE LINEAGE SYSTEM

213

The words 'tut' or 'gat twot', son of a bull, are used in the same manner as 'dil' and 'gat dila'. Here again a man may be a *tut* of his lineage, in contrast to accretions of strangers and Dinka who live in the district associated with it, without being a *tut* of the tribe of which that district forms part, e.g. a man may be a *tut* of the JaaJoah secondary section of the Lou tribe without being a *tut Looka*, because the aristocratic clan of the whole of Lou country are the JINACA, and the JAAJOAH are not members of this clan. In other words a man may call himself a *tut* of the JaaJoah to emphasize that he is a JAAJOAH and not merely a JaaJoah, but he does not thereby imply that he is a *tut Looka*. In a still more general sense *tut* may, as we have noted, merely mean a pater-familias or even a male person. One must judge from the context how the expression should be translated. In this book we use the words *tut* or *gat twot* in the sense, defined on pp. 179-80, of an elder, and we use the word *dil* to refer to a tribal aristocrat.

614
619
565

It is difficult to find an English word that adequately describes the social position of *dil* in a tribe. We have called them aristocrats, but do not wish to imply that Nuer regard them as of superior rank, for, as we have emphatically declared, the idea of a man lording it over others is repugnant to them. On the whole—we will qualify the statement later—the *dil* have prestige rather than rank and influence rather than power. If you are a *dil* of the tribe in which you live you are more than a simple tribesman. You are one of the owners of the country, its village sites, its pastures, its fishing pools and wells. Other people live there in virtue of marriage into your clan, adoption into your lineage, or of some other social tie. You are a leader of the tribe and the spear-name of your clan is invoked when the tribe goes to war. Wherever there is a *dil* in a village, the village clusters around him as a herd of cattle clusters around its bull.

619
565
554

I have described the position of *dil* as I judged it to be among the Lou tribe. I had the impression that to the west of the Nile their status was less pronounced, whereas among the Eastern Jikany tribes, on the periphery of Nuer expansion, it was more emphasized. In the Karlual area of the Leek tribe, the only part of western Nuerland I know more than superficially, the aristocratic prestige of a *dil* is recognized, but there are clans of strangers so well and long entrenched in the districts and villages in which they are found to-day that a *dil* has no legal privilege.

3 [See cat. 116 — Analyst]

THE LINEAGE SYSTEM

619 At a cursory glance, I gathered that conditions were elsewhere
565 the same in western Nuerland, except, perhaps, among the
554 Jikany where the status of *dil* may be more enhanced. Among
the Eastern Jikany one finds the greatest insistence on social
differentiation and legal privilege. The category of *dil* tends to
be more stressed in the larger tribes than in the smaller, and
when its structural function has been examined it will be under-
stood why this is so.

613 In a Nuer village or cattle camp there are seldom more than
621 a few families of *dil*. Most people are either *rul*, Nuer of other
563 clans, or *jaang*, persons of Dinka descent who have not been
565 adopted into Nuer lineages. A *rul* is a Nuer who in a certain
tribe is not a *dil*, though he may be a *dil* in another tribe. I have
already described how lineages split off from their localized
kinship groups, wander, join persons of other clans, and become
members of a new community. This process was well described
to me by a man of the Dok tribe. Members of a lineage beget
children and they become numerous and spread over the country-
side, wandering here, there, and everywhere. Then their close
relationship ends and they go to live in the midst of other clans
who are distantly related to them. Here they dwell as friends
and slowly forge new cognatic relationships by intermarriage.
Hence lineages are much mixed in all local communities.

613 Also Nuer say that no *dil* dwells in a social milieu composed
565 entirely of fellow aristocrats, for lineages of *dil* split up and
554 segments seek autonomy by becoming the nuclei of new social
agglomerations in which they are the aristocratic element. Thus
lineages of *dil* split up not only on account of internal dissension,
but because a man of personality likes to found his independent
settlement where he will be an important person rather than
remain a younger brother in a group of influential elder relatives.
I was told that this process by which any man, especially a *dil*,
could become a local leader is felt to be ingrained in their social
system and is a reason why they object to the creation by the
Government of a few local 'chiefs' whose position tends to
become formalized, permanent, and hereditary. To them this
is a rigid interpretation of status, based on territorial rather
than personal qualifications, which stabilizes the superiority
of a single man or lineage. Every man of standing feels that

THE LINEAGE SYSTEM

217

613
565
554 he should be a 'chief'. It does not follow that a man must be an aristocrat to gain influence among his fellow villagers. He may be a *ful* of some other lineage than the dominant one of his tribe who, by outstanding character, has been able to establish himself and his kin as social leaders in his locality.

There is thus in every tribe some differentiation of status, but the people so differentiated do not constitute classes, and 'strangers' and 'Dinka' are properly to be regarded as categories rather than as groups. Their relation to the aristocrats in the tribal system and the ways in which the different elements are integrated into communities will engage our attention in later sections.

VII

565
628
681
563 It is only in assessment of blood-cattle that social differentiation between aristocrats and Nuer strangers is of great significance, and then only among the Jikany tribes, principally among the Eastern Jikany. Among the Eastern Jikany the kinsmen of a *dil*, aristocrat, who was killed had to be compensated by payment of more cattle than the kinsmen of a slain *ful*, stranger, or *jaang*, Dinka. It is not easy to know to what extent this privilege could be enforced, or even to discover the relative assessments of blood-cattle. There was undoubtedly considerable elasticity in reckoning who counted as equivalent to a *dil* in situations of homicide and variation in the number of cattle paid for homicide. It was asserted by several informants that in pre-government days a true Nuer, called in the Jikany tribes a *gat Geeka*, counted the same as a *dil* Jikany for purposes of assessing blood-cattle, and I was given the following blood-cattle assessments: a Jikany aristocrat, 40, a Nuer stranger, 40, a Dinka adopted by a Jikany aristocrat, 20, a Dinka who had been adopted by a Nuer stranger, 20, and an unadopted Dinka, 6. In more recent practice the following payments seem to have been regarded as usual: a Jikany aristocrat, 20, a Nuer stranger, 17, a Dinka who has settled permanently in the country, 16, a Dinka who has not been long settled, 10.

I was not long enough among the Eastern Jikany to investigate this matter thoroughly, but I received the impression that the second list was coloured in its variation of assessment, as it was certainly influenced in amounts of assessment, by recent Government decisions; though the informants who gave it insisted that it was in proportion to the ancient assessments. Aristocrats assured me that in the past more cattle were always paid for the homicide of an aristocrat than for that of a Nuer stranger. Members

THE LINEAGE SYSTEM

613
773
173

In every Nuer tribe there are similar stories which explain the relations between the aristocratic clan and large stranger lineages living with it. Other myths explain the relations between these stranger lineages. Thus the lineages living at Nyenyeny and in neighbouring villages in Leek country, JUAK, NGWOL, JIKUL, &c., are all mythologically related to one another and to the dominant clan of the Leek tribe. These myths also explain the ritual symbols and observances of the lineages mentioned in them.

Actual interrelations of a political kind are thus explained and justified in mythological interrelations, and wherever, as far as we know, large lineages of different clans are politically associated there is a myth bringing their ancestors into some social relationship. This is especially the case between dominant lineages and stranger or Dinka lineages, and the mythological link gives them equality and fraternity in community life, while permitting ritual exclusiveness and intermarriage between them. Complete assimilation is impossible, for there must always be ritual distinction or the clan and lineage systems would collapse. Strangers have to be incorporated into the community of the dominant lineage and excluded from its agnatic structure.

XI

602
609
554

By adoption, the recognition of the equivalence of cognatic and agnatic ties in community life, and by mythological relationships, all persons in a tribal segment have kinship relationships of some kind to one another and the segments themselves are given a kinship relationship to each other within the political system. Although the categories of *diel*, *ru*, and *jaang* create social differentiation, it is on a ritual and domestic, rather than on a political, plane and is only indicated in certain situations of social life.

This is evident in the Nuer use of the three words denoting the three statuses. It is a common Nuer practice when addressing people and speaking publicly about them to use words which denote a closer relationship between them and the speaker than their actual relationship. This is commonly done with kinship terms and, also, in defining the status of a person in his tribe. Nuer do not emphasize that a man is a stranger or Dinka by

THE LINEAGE SYSTEM

235

alluding to him as such in ordinary social life, for it is in rare situations that his being other than an aristocrat is relevant: to some extent in payment of blood-cattle, in questions of exogamy, and at sacrifices and feasts. A stranger who has made his home with aristocrats is treated as a social equal and regards himself as such. People do not call him a *rul*, for he is a member of their community. They may even refer to him as a *dil* out of politeness. In the same way people do not refer to an adopted Dinka as '*Jaang*'; for he is by adoption a brother of aristocrats or of Nuer of other lineages. One would not ordinarily speak of unadopted Dinka residents as '*Jaang*', but as '*rul*'. Just as strangers tend to be linguistically assimilated to aristocrats, so Dinka tend to be assimilated to strangers, and people speak only of unconquered Dinka of Dinkaland by the contemptuous expression '*Jaang*'. Nuer do not make distinctions of status between people who live with them, share their fights, partake of their hospitality, and are members of their community against other communities. Community of living overrides differentiation of descent.

We again emphasize that the designations 'aristocrat', 'stranger', and 'Dinka' in a Nuer tribe are relative terms, being defined by the relations of persons in the social structure in specific situations of social life. A man is a stranger, or Dinka, in reference to a few, mainly ritual, situations, but is not indicated as such on other occasions; and a man is a stranger or Dinka in relation to members of a social group, but is not considered by them to have a differentiated status in relation to another group. A stranger is a stranger to you, your stranger, but is one of you *vis-à-vis* other people. A Dinka is a Dinka to you, your Dinka, but he is your brother *vis-à-vis* other people. In political structure all members of a segment are essentially undifferentiated in its relation to other segments.

How can it be explained that among a people so democratic in sentiment and so ready to express it in violence a clan is given superior status in each tribe? We believe that the facts we have recorded provide an answer in terms of tribal structure. Many Nuer tribes are large in area and population—some of them very large—and they are more than territorial expressions, for we have shown that they have a complex segmentary structure which the Nuer themselves see as a system. As there are no

602

609

554●

619

614

565

THE AGE-SET SYSTEM

257

561 bably always been the same number of sets in existence at any time and these sets always have the same relative positions to each other in the system, regardless of actual groups of men composing them.

561
182
177 It is significant that among the Nuer, as among other East African peoples, the age-set system is the first institution to undergo rapid and great modification under European rule and that the other social systems do not appear to be affected by the changes in its constitution. This tends to confirm the opinion we have earlier expressed, that whilst the age-set system is combined with the territorial and lineage systems in the same social cadre and is consistent with them, the consistency is not an interdependence.

IV

561
554 Within the age-set system the position of every male Nuer is structurally defined in relation to every other male Nuer and his status to them is one of seniority, equality, or juniority. It is difficult to describe these statuses in terms of behaviour, because the attitudes they impose are often of a very general nature. The following points may, however, be noted. (1) There are certain ritual observances and avoidances, chiefly between members of the same set, but also between sets. The most important of these are the segregation of the sets at sacrificial feasts, to which we have referred, and the stringent prohibition on members of a set burying an age-mate or partaking of the meat of beasts sacrificed at his mortuary ceremony; but there are a number of other ritual injunctions. (2) A man may not marry, or have sexual relations with, the daughter of an age-mate, for she is his 'daughter' and he is her 'father'. Also, while a man may always have sexual relations with the daughter of one of his father's age-mates he ought not to marry her unless either his father, or her father, is dead, and then only after the parties to the marriage have exchanged beasts in atonement to the age-set of the fathers. (3) Members of the same age-set are on terms of entire equality. A man does not stand on ceremony with his age-mates, but jokes, plays, and eats with them at his ease. Age-mates associate in work, war, and in all the pursuits of leisure. They are expected to offer one

[784]
[834]
[834]
561
571

POLITICAL AUTHORITY

31

We have seen that the period of invasion from the west, when the Nuer had a high degree of political cohesion, was followed by a period of expansion and absorption of Dinka. In the absence of external opposition a process of segmentation and political fission followed. In Gaawar we find that the descendants of Kerfeil began to lose their influence, particularly during the early period of Arab penetration, and it is at this period too that the division of Gaawar into the Bar and Radh primary segments became particularly marked. The majority of the Radh threw in their lot with Arab slavers and preyed upon their neighbours, and although the line of political cleavage did not follow strictly the distinction between the primary segments of the tribe, the Bar section to the south, joined by certain Radh secondary segments living in that direction and especially those resident on the Zeraf Island, were in permanent opposition to the remainder of the Radh. At this period Nuar Mer, an adopted son (of Dinka origin) of the Kerfeil lineage, is sometimes referred to as *ruic* of the Radh, while in Bar, although there was never sufficient cohesion to allow complete ascendancy, we hear of such leaders as Liaab Liou. Finally, in the event of extreme danger the Bar began to turn to Deng Likea, who certainly had no hereditary claim to leadership but had magical powers and the gift of prophecy much admired by the people. When the Dervishes withdrew he rallied the forces of Bar around him, inflicted a crushing defeat on the treacherous Nuer sections who had assisted them, and killed Nuar Mer. Deng Likea is also referred to as *ruic* Gánwaar. This process can be traced in most Nuer tribes. 173

For a while the concept of *ruic* Naadh remained vested in the Nuer 'prophets' in opposition to foreign aggression in the form of the present Government, but this has vanished since their defeat and removal, and nowadays if a Nuer is asked who is *ruic* Naadh, he will reply that it is the Government or more likely the District Commissioner. 624

The term *ruic*, like the word *cieng*, is relative to the social structure. There were also *ruic* whose influence was effective only in segments of a tribe and their significance was greatest at a period when political cohesion on a tribal scale was at its lowest ebb. There was no idea of an institutionalized authority set at the head of a tribe or a tribal segment, though there was perhaps always a tendency for the office to run on hereditary lines within the dominant lineage. Any person might achieve such influence over his fellows by reason of certain qualities which the Nuer consider admirable: generosity in the giving of cattle and in hospitality, which itself indicates a special regard for the obligations of kinship; wisdom and even temper in settling disputes between others; ability to hold the group together, a further expression of the kinship idea; bravery and powers of leadership in war. 624 554

These characteristics are also inherent in the conception of the *gat*

624
 554
 [619] *tuot* or *tut wec*, the 'bull of the herd', a position which is acquired within a dominant lineage and extended in relation to other lineages. The expression *gat tuot*, as we have seen, is used in the same sense as *diel* and refers to any member of a dominant lineage, but it has a more restricted meaning and is used nowadays to indicate a 'head-man' in the Government system of administrative agents. The *tut wec*, the 'bull of the herd', however, is used generally to refer to the man who is recognized within the segment, whatever its size, as the most important adult male. His position is in the first place derived from his place in the genealogy of the dominant lineage, but it is largely dependent on his personality and prestige. The word *ruic* is sometimes applied to the *tut wec*, but has clearly a much wider significance in political relations and in past history. Finally, it is worth noting that there were never any *ruic* whose influence extended over a unit of society larger than the tribe, which tends to support Professor Evans-Pritchard's contention that the tribe is the largest unit of any permanent political significance.

There is even some evidence that the *ruic Naadh* in much earlier days had greater influence, though the emphasis is placed on their ritual rather than political status. I have heard Nuer say of Buogh Kerfeil that he assumed the stool (*kum* or *kwom*),¹ a fact which suggests some special symbol of office. They also talk of a ceremony in which he was 'lifted up to God' by his fellows, suggesting a ritual investiture. Yet, although Nuer tradition refers to events which happened in the time of old men's grandfathers and, being thus much more recent than Dinka or Shilluk mythology, may have a greater degree of historical accuracy, the story scarcely provides adequate evidence that a form of institutionalized authority was then in existence or that the *ruic Naadh* approximated even remotely to the general conception of an African Chief with political and executive powers.

The essential distinction is that among the Nuer the concept of *ruic* does not imply a crystallized institution in the form of a position in society automatically filled when the present holder dies. In the past, if a hereditary successor did assume the position, this did not mean that his influence would necessarily extend over the sphere affected by the actions of his predecessor. If a *ruic* died his successor gradually established himself by the accumulation of prestige and popularity among the people and gained their acceptance. There is no evidence of a stabilized institution continuing on a permanent level throughout Nuer history. The *ruic* of a tribe only exercised authority, if influence based on powers of persuasion can be called authority, so

¹ The Nuer *kum* is an ambatch stick-shield which is also used to sit on. The idea of a stool as a throne is unknown to the Nuer, but may here be derived from the Shilluk. Among the Shilluk the *reth* or king is ceremonially enthroned on the sacred stool (*kwom*) at his installation. See P. P. Howell and W. P. G. Thompson, 'The Death of a Shilluk *Reth* and the Installation of his Successor', *S.N.R.*, 1946.

LEADERSHIP

33

long as there was a semblance of political unity in the tribe or segment in opposition to other tribes or foreigners. His authority was not at any time equally effective in all segments of a tribe. *Ruic Naadh* is a concept which follows the lines of political cleavage. 624 554

It seems, then, that Professor Evans-Pritchard's critics display a confusion of thought when they suggest that there was anything in the nature of a formalized political institution inherent in the status of the Leopard-Skin Chief or indeed in the concept of *ruic Naadh*, but Professor Evans-Pritchard has not made it sufficiently clear that the concept of *ruic Naadh* did exist. Writing of the Nuer political system, he says: 624

The Nuer constitution is highly individualistic and libertarian. It is an acephalous state, lacking legislative, judicial, and executive organs. Nevertheless it is far from chaotic. It has a persistent and coherent form which might be called 'ordered anarchy'. The absence of centralized government and bureaucracy in the nation, in the tribe, and in tribal segments—for even in the village authority is not vested in anyone—is less remarkable than the absence of any persons who represent the unity and exclusiveness of these groups.¹

Yet the Nuer are, and always have been, acutely conscious of the need for unity and are always seeking someone by whom and through whom social disharmony can be averted. Their traditions, which are sufficiently recent to contain at least an element of fact, are full of references to great leaders, as we have seen; and these were persons who achieved at least a semblance of co-ordination and came to symbolize common aspirations. Whereas among some African peoples these aspirations are attached to organized and permanent institutions, among the Nuer they were focussed on personalities. Their principal characteristics are to be seen in Nuer ideals: the desire and the ability to bind the people together; to mediate and to settle internal quarrels and disputes; to negotiate agreements with other tribes and peoples if they are to the advantage of the Nuer; to maintain good relations between neighbours; in fact, to check the process of fission which to the Nuer is highly undesirable. These qualities are stressed in Nuer tradition far more frequently than ability to lead the warriors into battle against the Dinka, and are more important than their sagas of great exploits and daring. The *ruic Naadh* were men who, by outstanding personality and powers of leadership, gained such prestige that they were able to persuade the unruly Nuer to listen to them. They achieved a degree of authority acceptable only so long as the sanctions making for political unity within the group which they swayed were sufficiently strong to maintain it. 624 554

The word *ruic* is itself significant. It is derived from the word *ruac* meaning speech or talk. The best translation is therefore 'spokesman'. Nuer also talk of the quality of *ruet*, which really means the

¹ Evans-Pritchard in *African Political Systems*, Oxford, 1940. p. 296.

624
554 ability to speak for the people; in fact, to voice their will. It is in this sense that the word expresses the Nuer idea of leadership, leadership which is derived from powers of persuasion. There is no sense of domination. The concept runs right through the tradition of Nuer leaders in the past who emerged at a time when political unity was required in the face of external aggression or for the furtherance of common enterprise.

The Appointment of Tribal Authorities Today

624 The concept of *ruic* has been mentioned here, not so much because its existence provides evidence of anything in the nature of formalized legal procedures which operated in the past, but because it is relevant to the appointment of tribal representatives today.

592 In the early stages of the Administration there was a tendency to use as administrative agents persons who had acquired significance not from their positions in the dominant lineages of the tribes but from their possession of magical or religious attributes. This was at any rate partly due to the fact that at the time of the arrival of the Sudan Government, what leadership existed was vested in the 'prophets' who had usurped the position from men whose status was derived from a traditional and more orthodox background in society.

624
554 Minor administrative agents, the representatives of smaller tribal segments, were nearly always chosen from dominant (*diet*) lineages, a fact which finds expression in the use of the term *gat tuot* to denote a 'headman' of a village or a lineage. Clearly, even in the early stages, these minor agents were essentially persons put forward by the people themselves and drawn from sources which would normally provide leaders; they were not nominees chosen regardless of their status in society. A *gat nyal* from a *ru* lineage was usually disqualified from the start. For example, in the Island section of the Radh Gaawar, a man called Gatluak Ngigni was appointed chief of the Per section. I intervened in this appointment rather more emphatically than usual, for there was a shortage of suitable candidates, and Gatluak was a man who had served satisfactorily for many years as a tribal policeman and as personal assistant to the previous chief. There was noticeable opposition from some sections of the community but the majority voted for his appointment. Later he became unpopular and opposition became open. There were clearly other reasons why they wished to get rid of him, but the main reason actually given was that he was a *gat nyal* of recent Western Nuer origin. To be a *gat nyal* does not entirely disqualify a man from gaining authority over his fellows or, nowadays, from holding an official position, but it is certainly a disadvantage, and only a strong and popular character can overcome the handicap.

TRIBAL AUTHORITIES TODAY

35.

In Central Nuer District, at any rate, election of Court Presidents and lesser chiefs¹ has been carried out with the minimum of interference, and the considerations which govern the choice are significant. There is often a tendency to hide the person most closely associated with the aura of the dominant lineage, for the Nuer feel that, in the somewhat precarious position of a chief *vis-à-vis* the Government, that aura may somehow be impaired. This is a religious concept, for the leading man in any lineage is considered to have inherent in him something of the spiritual qualities associated with the ancestral spirits of the kinship group. There is also always a tendency to defer to the supposed wishes of the District Commissioner. This does not necessarily mean that Nuer choose a man known to be popular with the Administration, but rather a man capable of maintaining an even and unirksome balance between the Administration and themselves. In fact, they seek someone who can give the appearance of exceptional zeal while protecting them as far as possible from the more laborious tasks imposed on them by Government. For this reason too there is sometimes a tendency to choose a man of weak character; but on the whole a strong man is chosen because, even if considered tiresome and over-zealous, he will somehow persuade them to perform those tasks, for they know well enough that the performance will in the end be less painful than the punishment imposed for the avoidance of public duties. Since there is often rivalry between opposing segments or lineages, there is finally a tendency to choose from a source which will be neutral in such rivalries, usually from the dominant lineage because this is one of the functions of the dominant lineage in the political structure.

The hierarchy of administrative agents is now largely drawn from dominant lineages, in the case of the tribe from the dominant lineage of that tribe, and so on down the segmentary scale. There are minor differences in the system to be found in the different districts, though the formation of the Nuer Council has tended to standardize Government policy in this respect. In each tribal area, or in some cases in a primary tribal segment, a court is established which is not only a legal institution through which legal disputes are settled and which has recognized forms of legal procedure, but is also an administrative organ through which administrative functions are carried out. In each court there is a president, called by the Nuer *kuaar* 'Book',² a number of chiefs representing the larger tribal segments,³ called in Nuer *kuaar lama*,⁴

¹ Technically such chiefs and members are appointed by the Governor of the Province or, in the case of Special (C) Courts, by the Governor with the consent of the Governor-General. Therefore I do not mean anything in the nature of a formal election, but public opinion is consulted.

² 'Chief of the book' in reference to the court register held by the president.

³ Secondary or tertiary tribal segments.

⁴ *Lama* refers to the sash given by the Government as a badge of office. From the Arabic *alama*—sash or badge.

624
554624
692

RITUAL EXPERTS

211

Religious Functionaries and Magical Experts

We have seen that the Leopard-Skin Chief has certain duties to perform in connexion with the composition of blood-feuds and that he may be called upon to arbitrate in disputes of almost any kind. His rôle is purely that of a mediator whose powers, both ritual and secular, are brought into operation only if there is a genuine desire by the hostile parties to reach an agreement. He has no executive powers with political force behind them, although it is expected that he will attempt to intervene in the early stages of a feud, and he sometimes threatens to use his power to curse the disputants if they will not agree. Moreover, in all matters in dispute, the frequency with which he will be approached depends largely on his prestige and personality, and not merely on his hereditary status. Other persons with no hereditary ritual status might easily acquire a reputation for fairness and tact and be employed as arbitrators in minor disputes. Skill in arbitration was considered by the Nuer one of the attributes of leadership (*ruac*), and the *ruic naadh* often extended their influence into the sphere of legal disputes.¹

There are also other kinds of ritual experts who have specific functions to perform for public welfare: fertility in man and cattle, success in hunting and fishing, in raids and warfare. In this category are the *wut ghok* or cattle expert, the *kuaar thoi*, the water expert, the *kuaar yiika*, who is mainly concerned with the fecundity of women, the *kuaar juath*, who deals with epidemic diseases among humans, the *gwan tang* or *kuaar bith*, who ensures the success of warriors in battle. These experts have regular duties to perform, a fact which distinguishes them from other categories of magical expert; they have an established ritual status in society, and are expected to carry out religious tasks which in some African tribes are less specialized or even embodied in the person of one man.²

Professor Evans-Pritchard has mentioned most of these experts in his writings on the Nuer, and has recorded most, but not all, of their duties. They are:

Kuaar kwac or *kuaar muon*: The Leopard-Skin Chief or Land Chief

The functions of this expert in connexion with homicide have been fully described in Chapter II. His is essentially an hereditary office,

¹ We are dealing here with the past. The functions of traditional experts are now much modified.

² The *reth* of the Shilluk, for example, who is, apart from his political and executive functions, generally responsible for fertility in man, cattle and crops, for success in hunting and fishing. (See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 9; and *Africa*, XXII, 1952.) He is responsible, however, for these matters as affecting the whole tribe. There is also among the Shilluk a number of specialists responsible for local interests, *jal juath*, *ajwago*, &c.

836 in sexual relations with girls. Before initiation boys may go to dances
883 but they merely watch and do not take part in them. After initiation they go with the other youths of the village and form part of the dancing group of their lineage (*dop*). When the dancing is over they seize the hands of the girls and sit and flirt with them. A boy will now commence permanent love affairs with girls, and a girl will be recognised by his friends as his love (*lumde*). No uninitiated boy would stand a chance of having a relationship of this kind with a girl, however large he might be, as she would merely laugh at him and call him a boy and tell him to go and become initiated. It is true that boys before initiation will have congress with small girls, but this is not socially recognised, and if his elders hear of it they will tell him not to be a fool as he is only a boy, but after initiation it is not only none of their business what he does, but also he is expected, nay, compelled, by custom to embark upon courtship.

411 An initiated boy is now invested with two external signs of manhood
884 besides the scars on his forehead. He is given a spear by his father and
421 also a bullock, which he had generally been promised before the operation. If he is lucky he will also get a bullock from a maternal or paternal uncle. A boy will seldom possess a spear of his own and if he carries one he will almost certainly be found to have borrowed it from a relative though he may become the owner of a fishing spear. The possession of a spear is a sign of manhood and it is an object of great pride. One is surprised at the real feeling a Nuer expresses for his spear, almost as though it were animate and not a mere weapon. He is never tired of sharpening and polishing it. It is always in his hand, not only when fighting, hunting and travelling, but also when dancing, leaping behind his bullocks, playing with his comrades, and even when he lays it down it is never far from his side. As the Nuer possess no knives a man's spear does service not only on those occasions when Africans generally make use of it, but on those occasions when other peoples use a knife, for culinary purposes, cutting leather in tether making, cutting ox's hide for a bed-rug, and other purposes.

233 A boy is even prouder when he becomes the owner of a bullock and
554 is invested with a bullock name. Even a small boy will speak of his
553 father's bullocks as "our bullocks," and will often regard one of them,
421 the calf of the cow he habitually milks, as his own special one. But it is only his in the general psychological sense of family communism. It

is not exclusively his and he cannot use it in the way in which bullocks are used for display. Also a boy will often take a bullock name from one of the animals in his father's herd to which he has taken a fancy, again generally the calf of the cow he milks every day, but this is only in imitation of his elders when playing with other boys in make believe of adult life. He has no right to the name and no man would address him by it nor would he mention it in the presence of his elders. But after initiation he has a bullock and a bullock name in his own full social right.

I have already mentioned how he will play with this bullock, and look after it, and sing about it. Undoubtedly a man feels much attachment to the animal and is very much upset at its death. I do not, however, consider this attachment to be like the sentimental attachment which Europeans often feel for a favourite dog or horse. Their feeling springs mainly, I believe, from the association of social prestige which the bullock brings to its owner. It is a shame if one has no bullock to display when one's comrades are having theirs lead in procession round the camp. The more bullocks one can put into these processions the greater the prestige of one's name, for a man with several bullocks is obviously a man of wealth and standing, while a man who has not even a single one is of the poorest of the poor. Even if we also take into account the ritual use of bullocks as a sacrificial medium between men and spirits and ghosts, I still think that there has been a tendency to exaggerate the emotional feeling of Nilotes towards particular animals. If a bullock dies its owner will acquire a new one and will take a new bullock name if he cares to do so. He may at any time change his bullock name if a new animal takes his fancy, though people generally seem to keep to the name they took after initiation. During his lifetime a man possesses a great number of bullocks and when he is married he will part with some of them, while others will be handed over to assist relatives to marry or to pay blood-compensation and yet others will be killed on ceremonial occasions. Nuer are never tired of speaking of these bullocks and enumerating their points. Much more could be said on the subject, but as it is only incidental to the institution of age-sets it cannot be discussed here in its completeness.

A man acquires a bullock name at initiation from the animal given to him by his father. He will be addressed by this name by his age-mates—it is particularly their privilege to do so—but also the members

132 of the age-sets directly senior and junior to his set may also call him
 553 by his bullock name. Members of his family and kin will address him
 by his birth name or by a relationship term. The use of a bullock name
 has egalitarian implications so that it would not be used between persons
 whose age-sets are distant from one another. A younger man would not
 address one much older than himself by his bullock name but as "*gwa*,"
 "father," or by the complimentary title of "son of so-and-so," mention-
 ing the name of his father, or "*gwa* of so-and-so," mentioning the name
 of his eldest child whether son or daughter. Also an old man would
 not address a much younger one by his bullock name, but as "*gatda*,"
 "my son."

561 The change of social behaviour which takes place in the life of a
 554 Nuer when he passes from the grade of boyhood to the grade of manhood,
 from *dhol* to *wut*, is shown in the customs I have just described, milking,
 household tasks of byre and kraal, love-making, dancing, ownership of
 spear and bullock and bullock-names, etc. But these are customs which
 differentiate one grade from another grade and not one set from another
 set. All the age-sets are equivalent in their enjoyment of these privileges
 and present an undifferentiated opposition to the boys who are deprived
 of them. There are no further grades into which a set as a whole advances.
 The Nuer age-sets do not pass out of the grade of warriors into the grade
 of elders as these grades are not clearly defined among the Nuer. A
 man, as explained above, ceases to fight when he considers himself too
 old for this sport and not because his set passes out of a warrior-grade.
 He marries when he is old enough to do so and when there are sufficient
 cattle to provide him with a bride, and not because his set passes into a
 grade of married elders. Instead of the three grades of the Masai system,
 Boy-grade, Warrior-grade, Elder-grade, there are properly only two
 Nuer grades, Boy-grade and Man-grade.

But though not graded the sets are stratified and have a traditional
 pattern of behaviour between one another so that membership of one set
 evokes a different pattern of behaviour from members of all the other
 sets. Thus, from the point of view of an individual Nuer, male society
 falls into three adult groupings: those whom you respect as seniors
 (associated with your fathers); those with whom you are on terms of
 intimacy (associated with your brothers); those who owe respect to you
 (associated with your sons). These patterns of authority, submissiveness
 and equality, are the only three possible patterns of behaviour between

individuals in any society, and every society has techniques for determining beforehand which pattern a man employs towards any given member of his community. Nuer culture does this by means of its age-sets as well as through its kinship structure. Any doubt as to how you should act towards a fellow Nuer is eliminated because your attitude towards him is largely determined by your respective memberships of age-sets. Friction and hesitation are avoided because the title of a set evokes from its members a clear pattern of behaviour (a) among themselves, (b) towards members of senior-sets, (c) towards members of junior-sets.

It may be objected that there are more than three age-sets living at the same time, but from the point of view of an individual, the age-sets tend to fall into three groups corresponding with the three generations of father—self—son. Generations are only distinct for the individual. Thus, to-day, in Lou country the following age-sets still have living members: *Thut*, *Boiloc*, *Maker*, *Dangunga*, *Luac*, *Lithgac*, and any three of these will generally form a generation in relation to the life history of an individual. To a *Lithgac* son of a *Maker* father all members of the *Maker* age-set are his "fathers" and form a group whose daughters he ought not to marry because their "fathers" are his father's also. To this group he owes respect. The age-sets of *Thut* and *Boiloc* fall into the same category as the *Maker* with certain differences due to the greater age of their members. On the other hand a *lithgac* regards the members of the *Luac* age-set as being on much the same plane as himself in relation to *Dangunga* and *Maker*. The *Luac* and the *Lithgac* will call one another by their bullock-names, and if a *Dangunga* man kills a bullock at a ceremonial feast they will eat together and not with the *Dangunga*. It seems that if a *Maker* man kills a beast at a feast the *Maker* and the *Boiloc* will eat together and the *Dangunga* and *Luac* together; while the *Lithgac* will eat by themselves. Thus, at any one time, owing to the limitations of life, there is a tendency for the age-sets to fall into three divisions in respect to any individual, his seniors, his equals and his juniors. At the beginning of manhood there are only two divisions, equals and seniors, and at the end of manhood there are also only two divisions, equals and juniors, but in middle life there are three divisions.

This social overlapping fits in with biological overlapping, for not all of a man's sons are initiated into the same set. Generally the eldest

561
554•

561
554 son is initiated into an age-set with one (or sometimes two) intervening age-sets between his age-set and his father's age-set, but two (or sometimes three) age-sets intervene between the age-sets of younger sons and the age-set of their father. This overlapping seems complicated to us but is not so to a Nuer. If we consider the position of a member of the *Maker* age-set we shall see that the *Boiloc* are too young to be his "fathers" and he tends to regard them as his equals in contrast to the *Thut*. A man of the *Dangunga* age-set in the same way regards the *Maker* as his equals because they belong to a younger age-set than that of his "fathers"; but he recognises the authoritarian position of the *Boiloc*. Any set tends to regard the set directly senior to it as its equals, though seniors, in contrast to the set higher up who are not only its seniors by a long period of years but also its "fathers." So that while the *Dangunga* regard themselves as of much the same status as the *Maker* in relation to the *Boiloc* the *Maker* regard themselves as of much the same status as the *Boiloc* in relation to the *Dangunga*. Or, while the *Lithgac* consider their position approximately that of the *Luac* when speaking of the *Dangunga*, the *Luac* group themselves with the *Dangunga* when speaking of the *Maker*.

The few examples given beneath show actual cases of division between age-sets of fathers and sons. I have stated where the son is the eldest son, but in other cases where I have written younger son I am unable to say for certain his position in the order of sons.

Father.	Age-set.	Son.	Age-set.	Intervening sets.
Kerker	<i>Maker</i>	Wan (eldest son)	<i>Lithgac</i> (<i>Caiyas</i>)	two
Bul	<i>Maker</i>	Jok (eldest son)	<i>Lithgac</i> (<i>indif</i>)	two
Cam	<i>Dangunga</i>	Wie (eldest son)	<i>Lithgac</i> (<i>Caiyas</i>)	one
Caroah	<i>Thut</i>	Cam (eldest son)	<i>Dangunga</i>	two
Jek	<i>Thut</i>	Ret (eldest son)	<i>Dangunga</i>	two
Rainen	<i>Tanghwer</i>	Nhial (eldest son)	<i>Pilual</i>	one
Ngundeng	<i>Thut</i>	Deng (younger son)	<i>Luac</i>	three
Ngundeng	<i>Thut</i>	Riam (eldest son)	<i>Maker</i>	one
Diung	<i>Thut</i>	Chag (eldest son)	<i>Dangunga</i>	two
Diung	<i>Thut</i>	Jok (younger son)	<i>Luac</i>	three
Ngot	<i>Lilnyaang</i>	Rainen (eldest son ?)	<i>Wandael</i>	one

In this list there are only two cases where two generations are recorded, and though two cases are not adequate to show the normal number of age-sets which go to a generation I think that, nevertheless, these two are typical. 561
554

<i>Thut</i>	Caroah	} generation
<i>Boiloc</i>		
<i>Maher</i>		
<i>Dangunga</i>	Cam	} generation
<i>Luac</i>		
<i>Lithgac</i>	Wie	
<i>Lilnyang</i>	Ngot	} generation
<i>Ruob</i>		
<i>Wangdeal</i>	Rainen	
<i>Rol</i>		} generation
<i>Pilual</i>	Nhial	

It is not easy to describe the patterns of behaviour which operate between age-sets as they are of a very general nature. They are formally expressed in feasts when members of an age-set, or of two consecutive age-sets, eat together and apart from their seniors and juniors, or when members of an age-set purposely abstain from taking part in a feast when one of their members has died. But also in the daily life of village and cattle camp juniors show seniors deference in all situations which occur, in disputes, discussions, economic activities, etiquette, and so on. Father Crazzolaro gives an example of this deference when he says "a boy has caught a fish, and an old man, a *ric*-comrade of his father, desires to have this fish and the boy must give it to him, and when his father, for whom it was intended, hears of this, he is glad that his son has such good manners."¹

Age-mates are on terms of complete equality. They associate together in all activities of life, in work and war and leisure. A man does not stand on ceremony with an age-mate but eats and plays and jokes with him as an equal. When two men of the same *ric* are quarrelling, so long as their quarrel has not resulted in a serious fight, others ought not to interfere. I have often noticed that when small boys of about the same age are fighting with their spiked bracelets the men will laugh and encourage them, saying that they are of the same *ric*, that is to say, of the same age, but the womenfolk run to separate the boys and to take the part

¹ Hat ein Bursche einen Fisch erlegt und ein Ricgenosse seines Vaters wünscht ihn, so hat er ihm denselben zu geben; und wenn der Vater, für den der Fisch bestimmt war, davon hört, wird er sich über seinen gut erzogenen Sohn freuen.

THE NUER OF THE SOUTHERN SUDAN

289

a severe ordeal and a series of rites connected with it. These initiations take place whenever there are a sufficient number of boys of from about fourteen to sixteen years of age in a village or district. All the youths who have been initiated in a successive number of years belong to one age-set, and there is a four-year interval between the last batch of initiates of one set and the first batch of the next set, and during this interval no boys may be initiated. The initiation period is open for about six years, so that, with the four years of the closed period, there are about ten years between the commencement of any age-set and the commencement of the set that precedes or succeeds it. The age-sets are not organized in a cycle. 561

Nuer age-sets are a tribal institution in the sense that, in the larger tribes at any rate, all the sections of a tribe have the same open and closed periods and call the sets by the same names. They are also the most characteristic of all Nuer national institutions, for initiation scars are the sign of their communion and the badge of their supremacy. Moreover, though each big tribe has its own age-set organization, adjacent tribes co-ordinate their sets in periods and nomenclature, so that the Western Nuer, the Eastern Nuer, and the Central Nuer tend to fall into three divisions in this respect. But even when a man travels from one end of Nuerland to the other, he can always, and easily, perceive the set which is equivalent to his own in each area. The age-set system, therefore, like the clan system, whilst having a tribal connotation, is not bound by lines of political cleavage. 619

There is usually in each tribe a man whose privilege it is to open and close initiation periods and to give each set its name. This man belongs to one of those lineages which have a special ritual relationship to cattle and are known as 'Men of the Cattle'. He opens and closes initiation periods in his own district, and other districts of his tribe follow suit. Once a period has been opened, each village and district initiates its boys when it pleases. The age-sets have no corporate activities and cannot be said to have specific political functions. There are no grades of 'warriors' and 'elders' concerned with the administration of the country, and the sets are not regiments, for a man fights with the members of his local community, irrespective of age. In the rites of initiation there is no educative or moral training. There is no leadership in the sets. 561 [564]●

THE NUER OF THE SOUTHERN SUDAN

293

The balanced opposition of political segments is, we believe, ⁶²⁸ largely maintained by the institution of the feud which permits a state of latent hostility between local communities, but allows also their fusion in a larger group. We say that the hostility is latent because even when a feud is being prosecuted there is no uninterrupted endeavour to exact vengeance, but the kinsmen of the dead may take any opportunity that presents itself to accomplish their purpose; and, also, because even when compensation has been accepted the sore rankles and the feud may, in spite of settlement, break out again, for Nuer recognize that in sentiment a feud goes on for ever. The leopard-skin chief does not rule and judge, but acts as mediator through whom communities desirous of ending open hostility can conclude an active state of feud. The feud, including the role played in it by the chief, is thus a mechanism by which the political structure maintains itself in the form known to us.

The leopard-skin chief may also act as mediator in disputes ⁶²⁴ concerning ownership of cattle, and he and the elders on both ⁵⁵⁴ sides may express their opinion on the merits of a case. But the ⁵⁷⁸ chief does not summon the defendants, for he has neither court nor jurisdiction and, moreover, has no means of compelling compliance. All he can do is to go with the plaintiff and some elders of his community to the home of the defendant and to ask him and his kinsmen to discuss the matter. Only if both sides are willing to submit to arbitration can it be settled. Also, although the chief, after consultation with the elders, can give a verdict, this verdict is reached by general agreement and in a large measure, therefore, arises from an acknowledgement by the defendant's or plaintiff's party that the other party has justice on its side. It is, however, very seldom that a chief is asked to act as mediator, and there is no one else who has authority to intervene in disputes, which are settled by other than legal methods.

In the strict sense of the word, the Nuer have no law. There is ¹⁸³ no one with legislative or juridical functions. There are conven- ⁶⁷¹ tional payments considered due to a man who has suffered certain injuries—adultery with his wife, fornication with his daughter, theft, broken limbs, &c.—but these do not make a legal system, for there is no constituted and impartial authority who decides on the rights and wrongs of a dispute and there is no external power to enforce such a decision were it given. If a man has right on his side, and, in virtue of that, obtains the support of his kinsmen and

12: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1930-1931) 1933

FJ22 Nuer FJ22

PLATE VII.

ARISTOCRATIC ELEMENT IN LOW TRIBES,
For primary section.Gun primary section
Gaatal sec. sect., Humjok sec. sect.,

DENAC (founder of JINACA clan)

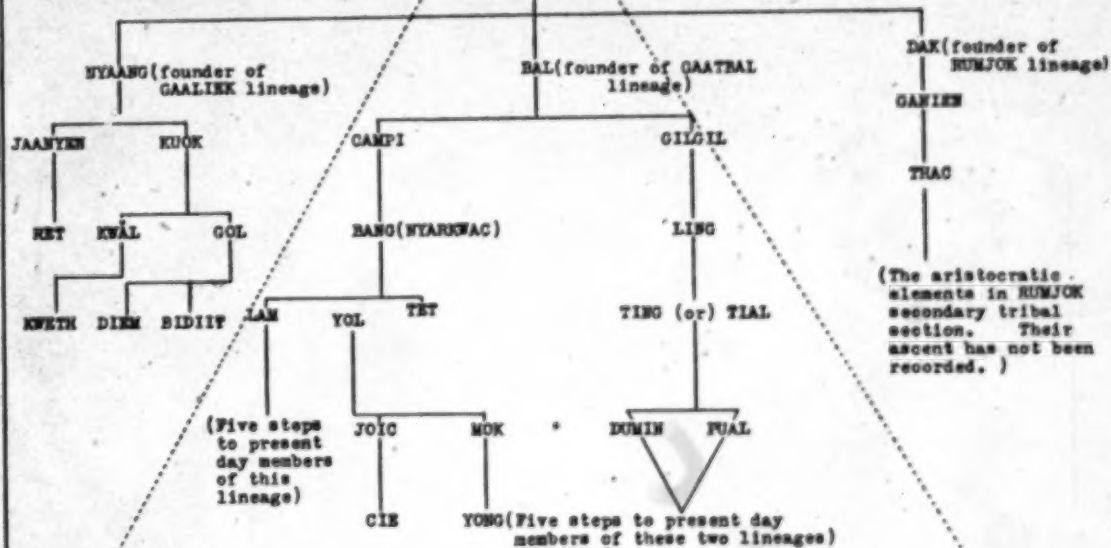


Diagram No. VII.

[Facing p. 34]

613
614
619
554

12: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1930-1931) 1933

FJ22 Nuer FJ22

PLATE VIII.

614
619
554

Aristocratic element in Jekany tribes.

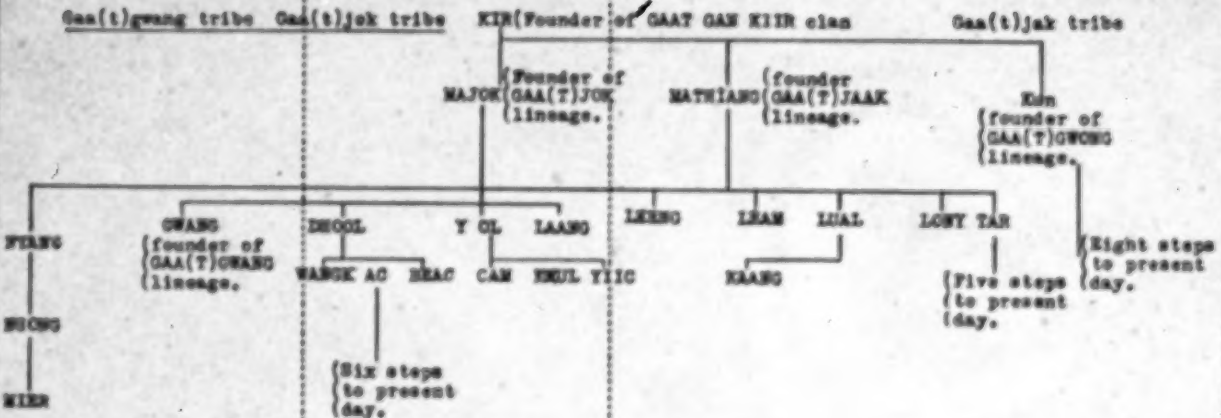


Diagram No. VIII

[facing p. 36]

in Lou country and Rengyan country forms only a small proportion of the total population of Lou and Rengyan tribesmen. Again, Gaajok country contains a dominant element of GAT.GAN KIIR clansmen of GAAJOK lineage, but they are dominant in the Gaajok tribe on account of their traditional ownership of the country and not on account of numerical superiority, for they probably compose only a small minority of the tribe. Also not all the GAAJOK live in Gaajok country in the Eastern Jekany area, since a large part of the lineage live in the Gaajok primary tribal section of the Jekany tribe to the west of the Nile and smaller lineages of the GAAJOK are scattered throughout most, if not all, Nuer tribes. The GAAJOK form an excellent illustration of this difference between clan and tribe, since the GAAJOK of the Eastern Jekany and the GAAJOK of the Western Jekany cannot obviously be fellow tribesmen on account of the vast area which separates their countries and since they never act together in any collective undertaking. On the other hand they are equally descended from Majok the son of Kir and hence are all members of the same lineage of the same clan. For this reason they are all brothers and sisters and forbidden to intermarry. [582]

But though the clan is not a territorial group nevertheless many clans are largely localised. Thus the descendants of Mathiang are mainly living in the two countries of Eastern and Western Gaajak. The descendants of Nac are mainly living in Lou and Rengyan countries, and the descendants of Wār are, I presume, mainly living in Gaawār country. But this by no means holds for all clans. There is no tribal area in which the JINEM mainly live or in which they have the position of owners of the soil, but they are scattered far and wide throughout the length and breadth of Nuerland. The same is true of the KIEK, JIDIET, BEEK and JIKUL, and a number of other clans.

When a clan is mainly localised in one tribal area it forms an aristocratic element there. The JINACA of Lou country lived originally with the JINACA of Rengyan country, but they split off from them and conquered Lou country from the Dinka. Here they were the first occupants, or more correctly the strongest element among the first occupants, and became "owners" of the country. Any other clansmen who came to live in Lou tribal area had to attach themselves on to the JINACA. The GAT GAN KIIR clan moved from their homeland to the west of the Nile and conquered the land, which they own to-day, on the eastern side of the

614
619
554
565

614 Nile, from the Dinka, and settled there as lords of the country. I think
 619 that it will probably be correct to say that every Nuer tribal area has its
 ● 554 *dil* (sing-*dil*) clan owners, aristocrats, dominant element, but that not
 565 every clan has an area in which they are *dil*. There are possibly countries
 on the west bank of the Nile in which more than one clan rank as *dil*.
 Though it has not been recorded that such a system exists among the
 Dinka it is worth mentioning that the Nuer tell one that the Dinka also
 speak of *dil* in their various tribes, e.g., they talk of *dil thoini* and *dil*
luaka, members of the clans which own Thoc and Luac tribal areas
 respectively.

The great point to remember about Nuer *dil* is that a man is a *dil*
 only in the country owned by his clan. Thus a member of the JINACA or
 GAATNACA is a *dil looka*, that is to say, that he is a *dil* in Lou country but
 nowhere else. If he moves to Gaajok country he ceases to be a *dil* and
 becomes instead a *ru* or stranger. He may still call himself a *gat dila*
looka, a Lou aristocrat, but he does not count as a *dil*, aristocrat, in Jekany
 countries. In the same way a *dil Jekany* is a direct descendant in the
 male line from Kir, but when such a man crosses Lou country he becomes
 a *ru* or stranger. *Dil* therefore means a member of the clan which owns
 the country in which he lives. Hence members of a clan such as the
 JIMEM or JIKUL which have no tribal territory of which they can call
 themselves masters are nowhere *dil*. One may nevertheless speak of a
dil JIMEM in the sense of a "real" or "pure" member of this clan in
 contrast to Dinka who have attached themselves to it.

614 I do not wish to be misunderstood when I speak of a tribal aristocracy
 619 based on a clan predominance in a tribal area. The Nuer are intensely
 554 democratic and the idea of one man lording it over the others is abhorrent
 565 to them. However there is a prestige in being a *dil* of the country in which
 [181] you live. Your clan are owners of the country, its village sites, its
 pastures; its fishing pools and wells, and other people live there by virtue
 of marriage or adoption into your lineage or because they are prepared to
 recognise your hereditary status and to join your local group on the under-
 standing that they are strangers and on sufferance. It is the spear-name
 of your clan which is shouted when the tribe makes war. In some tribes
 [632] the advantage of being an aristocrat are more concrete. Among the
 Eastern Jekany tribes the blood-money which is paid for a slain *dil* is
 apparently higher than for any other Nuer who may be killed in the same

THE NUER, TRIBE AND CLAN (SECTIONS I-IV)

43

countries. There is some doubt about the exact organisation of blood-cattle (*cu*) in old times. This uncertainty is partly accounted for by the undoubted elasticity of assessment, for we should make a mistake in supposing that the number of cattle paid over in compensation for homicide was invariably the same or that there was a rigid definition of social status. It is also partly accounted for by the fact that the *cu* was not identical in every Nuer tribe. The evidence seems to show that the greatest differentiation in assessment of blood-cattle between different classes in the community was to be found on the periphery of Nuer culture, among the Eastern Jekany, where the greatest absorption of foreigners has taken place. There I was given the following table of assessment for a late (probably post-European) period in their history:—

Gat dila Jikany (a member of the GAT GAN KIIR clan),

15 cows and 5 bullocks (20).

Gat Geeks (a member of any pure Nuer clan),

12 cows and 5 bullocks (17).

Jaang dila (a Dinka who has permanently settled in Nuer country and has attached himself to a Nuer social group),

11 cows and 5 bullocks (16).

Jaang (a Dinka, pure and simple, who has not yet become a permanent member of Nuer society),

8 cows and 2 bullocks (10).

In the old days it appears that 40 cattle was the regular payment for homicide in the case of a member of the dominant clan in Jikany countries, and for this pre-European period I was given the following table:—

GAT GAN KIIR ... 40 cattle.

Gat Geeks ... 40 cattle.

Jaang buthoi (an adopted Dinka) 20 cattle.

Jaang (Dinka—unadopted) ... 6 cattle.

There is one main discrepancy between the first and second tables. In the second a pure Nuer of any clan is classed as the same for purposes of blood-cattle as a member of the GAT GAN KIIR clan, while in the first he is classed lower. I was never able to make up my mind which of these two estimates—I have been given others which differ slightly from both—was the correct one since, while members of the GAT GAN KIIR clan in Jikany country assured me that payment for killing a member of any other Nuer clan in their country was less than for killing a member of their

614

619

554

565

682

554

614

619

682

563

554 own clan, members of these other clans, who here count as *ru* or strangers,
 614 assured me that payments in both cases were equal. Assurances on both
 619 sides were clearly coloured by recent practice which has been based on
 682 government rulings at different times and by what regulations they hoped
 563 the Government would institute in the future. On the whole I consider
 that there was probably a differentiation between members of the
 dominant clan and members of other clans, but that the differentiation
 was not rigid and depended upon the special circumstances of each case,
 when length of residence in the country, marriage alliances with members
 of the dominant clan, and so on, were taken into consideration.

Quite definitely, however, there was a clear difference made between
 Nuer and Dinka in the assessment of blood-cattle compensation. This
 difference is found all over Nuer country, though there seems to have been
 difference of opinion in different parts of Nuerland about what constitutes
 a Dinka for purposes of homicide payments. Among the Lou the practice
 was to class members of the dominant clan, the JINACA, and members of
 the other Nuer clans together and make 40 cattle (32 cows and 8 bullocks)
 the regular payment for both. The son of a Dinka born in Lou country
 was considered to have become a Nuer (*caa Nath*) and his death was also
 compensated for by 40 cattle; but a captured Dinka or visiting Dinka or
 a Dinka who had taken up his abode in the country was reckoned as a
Jaang and was compensated by only 6 cattle (4 cows and 2 bullocks).
 A Dinka even when given *buth* appears to have counted as *Jaang* and not
 as *Nath*, but his children were reckoned as Nuer for homicide purposes.
 Two informants told me that in Jagei country on the west bank of the
 Nile compensation for homicide was reckoned as follows:—

- Gat dila* (member of the dominant clan in the tribe),
 34 cows and 6 bullocks (40).
- Rul* who has built his cattle-byre,
 34 cows and 6 bullocks (40).
- Rul* and *Jaang* who have not built their cattle-byre,
 6 cows and 4 bullocks (10).

The point of stressing the building of a cattle-byre was that a man who built
 one, whether a Nuer stranger or a Dinka, had obviously come to stay and
 became a permanent member of your social group and a member of your
 village. He became "your man" (*randu*), who owed you a kind of
 allegiance and who relied on your protection. Hence he is assessed on

THE NUER, TRIBE AND CLAN (SECTIONS I-IV)

45

the same footing as an ordinary resident born into the community. On the other hand I was told by some Eastern Jekany Nuer at Nasser that once a Dinka always a Dinka was the rule, and that the children and grandchildren of Dinkas never counted as equal to pure Nuer in blood-cattle assessment. I regard this statement, however, as being, in all probability, too rigidly formulated.

The second element in a Nuer village are the *ruḷ*. A *ruḷ* is a stranger, one who is not a member of the *diel*, one who has no place in the lineage of the dominant clan. Such people may be more numerous than the clan itself but they have not the same hereditary status in the tribe. Sometimes their lineages compose powerful tribal sections and in these sections they form a dominant lineage of their own. They are linked by sociological ties, often mythological in form, to the *diel* of the tribe. Thus the powerful sections of Reng and Kōng of the Gaajak tribe are not *diel* but *ruḷ*. The Reng section is united to the genealogy of Kir by the supposition that Reng the founder of some of its lineages (Coḷ and Dhillēak) was equivalent to *gat manlen* (mother's sister's son) to Kir, his mother being a sister to the Ngok Dinka woman who nursed Kir and brought him up, while the founder of another lineage of this section, the Kōng, was a man called Tik, who is described in the Kir myths as having given him supernatural assistance and saved his life from avengers. The Jemac and JaaJoah clans, which give their names to two secondary tribal sections¹ of the Lou tribe, are not of the dominant Lou clan, the Jinaca, but are nuclei of two large segments which, together with the Gaaliek section, comprise the Mor moiety. Here again there is a myth which unites them to the *diel* of the tribe. Denac (Nac) is said to have had four sons, Yin, Dak, Bal and Bany, by one wife, and Nyaang and two brothers, who are nameless, by another wife. Nyaang's two brothers were killed by a strange monster, which figures often in Nuer mythology, and is known as a *let*. When the sons of Denac went fishing the four full Brothers went on their own and Nyaang by himself, for he would not accompany his brothers. Consequently when he caught a fish someone would come and steal it from him as he was all by himself. When he came home he would not sit on the ground facing his father as the other sons did but sat apart by himself with his back to his father and gazing in the opposite direction. When his father asked him what was the matter with him, he replied that he was thinking of his two

¹ In the Jemac section are included the important JaaGweth lineage who are supposed to be distantly related to the Jemac.

554 brothers whom the *let* had eaten. His father said to him, "Never mind,
 614 take your two sisters and let them be your brothers." So in future when
 619 Nyaang went fishing he went with his sisters Nyabil and Fadwai. Nyaang
 173 is the founder of the GAALIEK lineage, Nyabil of the JEMAC lineage,
 773 Fadwei of the JAAJOAH lineage. Whenever we find large sections living
 as *ru*l in a tribe we may expect to discover that bonds have been created
 between them and the *diel* by myths of the kind cited above. This
 mythological patent gives them a status in the tribe which is nearly equal
 to that of the *diel* and amounts to adoption into their kinship framework.

[61] This is often accomplished in Nuer society through the kinship value
 of the mother's line, for although lineages are, for purposes of descent,
 reckoned widest through the male line and comprise only agnates in
 respect to the inheritance of certain clan heirlooms, nevertheless descent
 through the female line has powerful recognition and there is a tendency
 for the kinship group to take the form of an association of cognates, of
 men and their sons and daughters and the children of sons and daughters.
 When strangers come to live in the village of *diel* and marry into their
 families there is always a drive towards matrilocal conditions, and
 descent through the mother is stressed so that the lineage of the strangers'
 sons is traced to the mother and through her linked to the clan of *diel*.
 We have already cited a good example of this process in the case of the
 JEMAC and JAAJOAH clans who trace their descent to the name of their
 ancestresses while the names of their husbands have been forgotten.
 Nevertheless, in spite of this, they form separate exogamous groups since
 they cannot be members of the clan of their ancestresses. They are
gaat nyal, children of daughters, in contrast to *gaat tiot*, children of "bulls"
 or children of sons. However, in some respects the original daughter
 who gave birth to the stranger's lineage is treated as though she had
 been a son, as the myth about Nyaang explicitly states, so that the
 lineage which springs from her still grows on her own genealogical tree.
 In this way there is always a tendency to translate bonds of contiguity
 into bonds of kinship.

554 Not all strangers form such important lineages as the THIANG, JEMAC,
 614 JAAJOAH (Lou tribe), GAAT TIEK, GAAT REANG (Gaajak tribe). Many
 619 *ru*l are members of small lineages of strangers living in the midst of other
 621 small foreign lineages all of which are aggregated around a nucleus of
gaat tiot. Thus in Lou country, among the Lou aristocratic element, the

THE NUER, TRIBE AND CLAN (SECTIONS I-IV)

47

JINACA, one finds many members of such clans as the JIMEM, JUAK, KIEK, KWERMOANG, in every section. These clans have no longer a *wec* (a home) of their own. Thus there is a story that the JIMEM once had a big *wec* but when some of them were absent their food was eaten by their brothers. This led to a quarrel, which resulted in the dispersal of the clan, and now, like the other clans mentioned above, they have no central homeland. There is, however, said to be a small JIMEM pocket near Lek country.

In the migration of the Nuer eastwards across the Nile there does not appear to have been any systematic colonisation, if we except the Jekany occupation of Dinkaland. Parties of warriors would raid the nearest Dinka homesteads and carry off their boys and girls and cattle. These warriors at first returned home with their spoil but later a portion of them settled down with their wives and families and built homesteads to the east of the Nile, where they were still in touch with their relatives across the river. Slowly there was a drift further and further eastwards, and whilst the bulk of the conquering warriors belonged to one clan originally there followed a steady infiltration from other clans whose members attached themselves to the original conquerors and settled among them. Also it must be presumed that before the Nuer crossed the Nile and conquered the Dinka country, which lay to the east of that river, some clans were already nuclei of political aggregation from other clans and from Dinka not unlike the aggregations which we find of the west bank of the Nile to-day. At the present time, moreover, families move freely about the country and attach themselves to new local groups into which they marry. Especially does this seem to be the case among the Western Nuer where there is a perfect jumble of small clan lineages. The link between newcomers and the lineages among which they settle is not so much the link of marriage as of descent, since the birth of a child unites the two families of husband and wife by a genealogical link and the sons of the wife become children of the husband's lineage and sister's children of the wife's lineage.

The manner in which lineages split up was well described to me by a Dok man. Members of a lineage give birth to children and they become numerous and spread over the countryside, wandering here and there and everywhere (*cihe dak piny*). Then their close relationship (*mar*) ends (*ci mar ihuk*). They go and live in the midst of other clans who are

Leopard-skin chiefs are usually men from certain lineages and, although they are not all members of the same clan, they are believed to have a kind of kinship through their office. The leopard-skin chief, unlike similar ritual officials in other Nilotic groups, does not represent or symbolise the unity and exclusiveness of any political group.

791
624

The Elders

The elders of a local community provide leadership and advice when required. Prestige and influence do not come with age alone, however; a man of outstanding reputation is called tut (bull), a term used to refer to men of high social standing who belong to lineages other than those of the dominant clan. A tut is head of a family and in charge of a homestead and a herd of cattle; he has the support of a large number of relatives and, in addition, he must be an able man with personality.

554

The got twot is 'the bull of the camp'. He has no defined status or authority but enjoys considerable prestige through a combination of factors - ownership of cattle, age, ritual powers, many children and relatives, personal ability and tact, and so forth. His prestige makes his personal actions and decisions influential so that, when he decides to move his homestead, others will naturally follow suit.

Districts and villages have no headmen or councils. There is not even a war leader except that, in a fight, the warriors automatically follow their most notable and brave fighters. There is thus an absence of legal institutions, official leadership and organised political activity. Evans-Pritchard writes: "their state is an acephalous kinship state...." and it is the kinship structure, in conjunction with territorial segmentation, which forms the basis of Nuer political organisation.⁽¹⁾

621

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NUER TRIBAL SEGMENTS AND THE LINEAGE SYSTEM

There are at least 20 clans in Nuerland, together with a number of small lineages of Dinka origin. A Nuer clan is an exogamous group of agnates who trace their descent from a common ancestor. The clans are segmented into lineages and each lineage is further segmented. Thus, a clan is segmented into maximal lineages, the maximal lineages are segmented into major lineages, the major lineages into minor lineages and minor lineages into minimal lineages. A minimal lineage, in the case of the Nuer, consists of a descent group deriving from a great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather. Clans and lineages are distinguished by separate names, ritual symbols and honorific titles.

614
613

The political and lineage groups are not identical but there is a certain correspondence. Often they bear the same name; for example, Gaawar is the name of a tribal area, of the tribesmen inhabiting it and also of the most powerful clan in it. Like the tribe, the Nuer clan has many of the characteristics accompanying segmentation. Lineages are distinct groups only in relation to one another and there is fusion of collateral

613
[614]

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.181.

DIFFERENTIATION OF STATUS AMONG THE NUER

There are three categories in a Nuer tribe: *diel*, *rul* and *joang*. 614
554

The dominant clan is *diel* and members of other clans settling after the establishment of the dominant lineage are *rul* (strangers). Not every member of a clan lives in a tribe where his clan has a superior status; a man is a *dil* (an aristocrat) only in the tribe in which his clan is dominant, for the status of *diel* derives from residence on land owned by the clan. Prestige, not authority or any particular power, is attached to the *diel*; they are owners of the land, the village sites and pastures. Strangers live on the land through some link with, and the recognition of, the true owners.

A *rul* (stranger) is a Nuer who is not a *dil* in the tribe in which he lives. He may be influential, highly respected and even a *tut* (bull), though not belonging to the aristocratic clan. He may, indeed, group round him an entire village community in spite of the presence of several tribal aristocrats in the same village; in this respect personality and influence may count for more in everyday local affairs than a particular lineage affiliation.⁽¹⁾ In fact, in the everyday life of a village community, the only socially significant difference between aristocrats and strangers is in the assessment of blood cattle, and this is only found among the Jikany tribes. 554
609

'Tribal bulls', on the other hand, belonging to a lineage of the dominant clan of a tribe, are far more important in the political system than the *rul* bulls, for they are centres of clusters of kin and are also agnates, each having in relation to the others a structural position in the lineage system of the dominant clan.⁽²⁾ 613
554

A *Dinka* adopted into a joint family is a *jaang* to the people of the family. To people outside the family he is a member of it and his status is not differentiated; he has all the rights and obligations of other members. Only the assessment of his value in blood cattle differentiates him from the Nuer. 597

Strangers may be attached to the dominant clan by adoption or by marriage. [614]

Kinship values are the strongest sentiments and norms in Nuer society, and all social interrelations tend to be expressed in kinship idioms. Since there are no headmen or councils or any of the usual forms of government, it seems that kinship values, combined with the position of the dominant lineage and its linked stranger lineages, are the originising agencies and the means of unity in each community. 602
621

The political system of the Nuer is constituted by the relations between territorial segments in the tribal system; cohesion and organisation are achieved through the association of the lineage system with the territorial units. The lines of cleavage tend to coincide, for lineages are 621
613
619

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Local Community among the Nuer*, 1950, p. 370.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 390.